



## *D*earest Friends:

*My “aha” moment came to me one evening while spending precious time with my two adorable nieces.*



*One day in November, Antonia, Francesca, and I had a play date that turned into a memorable sleepover, which opened my heart to a world of magical possibilities.*



*Soon after the excitement of the day’s events came to an end, I prepared a fun-filled sugar and spice bubble bath for my two adorable sweethearts, and then fussed around making sure that every inch of their sleeping quarters held all of their most favorite things.*



*“Pleasant dreams,” I whispered while they giggled and tugged playfully. “Aunt MIA,” Antonia and Francesca cried, “won’t you read us a bedtime story, please pretty, pretty, pretty please.”*

*“Why I would love to read you a story my little hearts,” and so I proceeded to study the bookshelves that surrounded the cozy room in hopes of finding just the right tale; a tale that would fill their hearts with wonder and embrace them with extraordinary dreams.*




*In looking around, my eyes rested upon my cuddly old true friend pOckets, my sentimental bear. The very same special bear that had been caring for all of my timeless sentiments.*



*It was as if pOckets, while waiting patiently perched in his chair, sprinkled some magical stardust in the air until I came to my senses and ceased this precious moment that would enable me to share a warm welcoming hug with my young and impressionable nieces.*

*continued*






*I tenderly lifted my teddy bear and felt reassured, as I anxiously made my way to the edge of their bed and explained to my nieces that I had a different story to tell; a story not found in any fairytale that they had ever read. In fact, this story was real and came from a place found only seen through the love that lived in my heart, from experiences that had been given to their aunt Mia while dancing through the passages of her life.*



*They were captivated by my words, and the cuddly bear that I had placed before them. I began telling them the story of the bear I named pOckets who held for me priceless treasures and valuable sentiments that had touched my heart through the years.*



*The story intrigued them from the moment I placed pOckets on my lap and began to speak of his pre-*



*cious gift. I then shared with them that this bear was given to me by their nonna Antonia (my mother) when I was a young girl just like them. I lovingly spoke of the love that I had for pOckets, and how he came to hold my treasures safe within his core. Then to their surprise I gently turned him over and proceeded to remove cherished keepsakes that had been placed into pOckets' secret hiding place.*




*They both quickly sat up making certain not to miss a single hidden token, while marveling at all of the sentimental treasures and memories that this little bear secretly held inside his back pocket.*



*Antonia and Francesca were amazed to discover that inside pOckets secret hiding place were many cherished souvenirs, and several of them belonged to their dear nonna. Treasures of hers like her blue bandana handkerchief, which reminded them of stories they had heard*

*continued*



*of how nonna Antonia would use it to remedy her headaches. I also shared love letters from admirers of long past, explaining that young love and all its enchantment would one day be theirs to enjoy.*



*They reached out to me with their tiny little hands anxiously wanting to touch pOckets, and begged for me to continue so they could revel in learning all they could of my concealed secrets and the tales that this special bear was able to tell.*



*It was in this very moment that my heart paused in awe, for I thought...How extraordinary that this little bear holding my most cherished sentiments is able to bring so much joy in the hearts of my nieces, while sharing a piece of my past that will remain in their hearts forever, and no doubt for many generations to come.*

*They anxiously asked if they too could have a bear just like pOckets and place all of their own treasures safely inside his secret hiding place. Delighted, and utterly thankful for this miraculous moment, my heart leaped from my month and cried, "Why of course my tender hearts, you too could have pOckets to love and place all of your treasures into his secret hiding place."*



*They asked if I would tell Santa to buy pOckets for them by Christmas time, which was only a month away. I put my heart to work, for I knew that their request wasn't just a car ride to any department store, but that I myself would have to create for them a pOckets to call their very own.*



*When I saw how happy they were to receive their own pOckets, I knew that this little bear's contagious love*

*continued*

would have to be shared with hearts of all ages,  
and all those who have their own stories to tell  
and memories to keep.



And that my friends is how I came to share  
pOckets The Sentimental Bear with you.

*Ps. A pOcket Full of Love Sentiments*

Maria Marchese Steele

*Mia Dolce*



*Antonia, Francesca,  
Aunt Mia, &  
pOckets The Sentimental Bear*

